

REMARKS

Claims 1-8 were presented for examination in the present application. The instant amendment cancels claim 4 without prejudice and adds new claims 9 and 10. Thus, claims 1-3 and 5-10 are presented for consideration upon entry of the instant amendment.

Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 3,584,641 to Milleville et al. (Milleville).

Claim 1 has been amended to include the elements of claim 4. As such, claim 1 now requires a sealing element having a foot part, a head part, and an elastic web part that connects the foot part with the head part.

As set forth by the present application, the web part represents an elastic connection between the head part and the foot part and, due to this elasticity, the assembly dimensions can be selected such that the web part is elastically deformed in the assembled state and the sealing lips thus always press against the switching element with a predefined force. See page 3, lines 20-27. Due to the predefined sealing force, the claimed ball valve provides a reliable seal even at a low pressures. When the switching element of the claimed ball valve is actuated, the web part ensures that the head part having the sealing lips can elastically move so that a low actuating force for turning the switching element is sufficient. After actuating the switching element, the elasticity of the web part ensures that the head part swivels back to provide the predefined sealing force. Thus, the claimed ball valve provides a high sealing tightness but a low actuation force.

In contrast, Milleville is directed to a lubricated ball valve assembly having a metallic seat ring 100 and an annular seat ring insert 102. Insert 102 is coaxially seated in a deep, annular groove 106 formed in seat ring 100. Insert 102 is molded as a solid mass into groove 106. See col. 5, lines 12-25. Insert 102 is formed of two annular axially aligned sections 111, 112, where section 111 is molded into groove 106 and

section 112 is molded over section 111 to extend from the groove 106. See col. 5, lines 60-70. Section 112 is formed with a primary sealing lip 142 and a secondary sealing lip 140. Thus, the insert 102 of Milleville has two sections 111 and 112 molded to each other.

It is respectfully submitted that the two sections of Milleville are not connected to one another by a web part, much less by an elastic web part, as recited by claim 1. Accordingly, claim 1 is not disclosed or suggested by Milleville.

Claim 1 is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 2-3 and 5-8 are also believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that they depend from the aforementioned claim 1. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections to claims 1-3 and 5-8 are respectfully requested.

Claims 9 and 10 have been added to point out various aspects of the present application. Support for new claims 9 and 10 can be found in the specification at least at page 4, line 12 through page 5, line 21. New claims 9 and 10 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

For example, independent claim 9 requires a sealing element having a head part, a foot part, and a web part connecting the foot part with the head part. Here, the web part has "a smaller cross section in comparison with said foot part and/or said head part".

Again, Milleville discloses an annular seat ring insert 102 formed of two annular axially aligned sections 111, 112, where section 111 is molded into groove 106 and section 112 is molded over section 111 to extend from the groove 106. See col. 5, lines 60-70. Clearly, the two sections of Milleville are not connected to one another by a web part as recited by claim 9.

Moreover, it is submitted that the two sections 111, 112 of Milleville have a

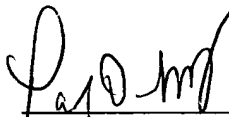
constant cross-sectional dimension as best seen in Figures 11 through 13. Clearly, the web part having a smaller cross section in comparison with the foot and/or head parts is not disclosed or suggested by the two sections of Milleville.

Accordingly, claim 9 is not disclosed or suggested by Milleville. Claim 9 is therefore believed to be in condition for allowance. Claim 10 is believed to be in condition for allowance for at least the reason that it depends from the aforementioned claim 9.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Such action is solicited. If for any reason the Examiner feels that consultation with Applicants' attorney would be helpful in the advancement of the prosecution, the Examiner is invited to call the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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